(c) Before every procurement season instructions are issued by the Department of Food and Public Distribution that FCI and agencies of the State Governments should mutually discuss and then open procurement centers in all districts producing marketable surplus of foodgrains. Instructions are also issued to FCI and the State Governments to give wide publicity through print and visual media as well as through banners, pamphlets etc. regarding the Minimum Support Price Scheme, names of the procurement agencies, particulars of purchase centers and FAQ specifications etc. Control Rooms are also set up in the. Ministry as well as FCI headquarters, FCI Regional offices and by the State Governments to monitor procurement and investigate reports of distress sale.

(d) Adequate powers are vested with State/UT Governments under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and the Prevention of Blackmarketing and maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980 for preventing malpractices in respect of essential commodities. Directions have been given to the State/UT Governments from time to time to take necessary action under both the Acts, and to strengthen their enforcement machinery. In the wake of rise in prices of wheat and pulses, Central Order was issued on 29th August, 2006 empowering State Governments to fix stock-holding limits in respect of these two essential commodities. This order has further been extended for six months with effect from 1st March, 2007.

Import of foodgrains

1413. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of foodgrains which have been imported during last five years, year and foodgrains-wise; and

(b) the names of the countries from where the imports have been made and the rate per ton thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

New legislation to protect consumers

1414. SHRI PR. RAJAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are introducing any new legislation to protect consumers; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.